

TENNESSEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FISCAL REVIEW COMMITTEE



FISCAL MEMORANDUM

HB 1547 – SB 1793

March 10, 2014

SUMMARY OF ORIGINAL BILL: Requires local education agencies (LEAs) to adopt policies that treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint in the same manner that an LEA would treat the voluntary expression of a secular viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject. Prohibits LEAs from discriminating against a student on the basis of the expression of a religious viewpoint. Requires LEAs to adopt policies that prohibit religious discrimination. Requires LEAs to have a limited public forum at certain events for the expression of students' religious viewpoints, if any. Authorizes students to express their beliefs, if any, in classroom assignments and prohibits discrimination against such expression. Authorizes students to organize prayer groups or similar religious gatherings to the same extent that other non-curricular groups are permitted to organize. Sets forth a model policy that LEAs may adopt that meets the student religious non-discrimination requirements of the bill. Requires LEAs to adopt and implement policies beginning in the 2014-2015 academic year.

FISCAL IMPACT OF ORIGINAL BILL:

NOT SIGNIFICANT

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENT (012952): Deletes all language of the original bill. Defines "limited public forum". Requires local education agencies (LEAs) to treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint in the same manner that LEAs would treat voluntary expression of a secular viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject. Prohibits LEAs from discriminating against a student on the basis of their expression of a religious viewpoint. Authorizes LEAs to make policies to allow student speakers a limited public forum at school events. Sets forth policy requirements for LEAs that elect to authorize limited public forums. Prohibits students from being excluded from a limited public forum because the subject is expressed from a religious point of view. Authorizes students to express their beliefs, if any, in classroom assignments and prohibits discrimination against any such expression. Authorizes students to organize prayer groups or similar religious gatherings to the same extent other non-curricular groups are permitted to organize. Authorizes LEAs to disclaim sponsorship of student speech in a limited public forum or religious student organization. The bill as amended shall become effective for the 2014-2015 academic year.

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FISCAL IMPACT OF BILL WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

Unchanged from the original fiscal note.

Assumptions for the bill as amended:

- LEAs continually revise and make new policy. Any LEAs that choose to establish policies for limited public forums will do so in the normal course of LEA revisions and meetings without a significant increase in local government expenditures.
- No fiscal impact on state expenditures.

CERTIFICATION:

The information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucian D. Geise', is positioned above the printed name.

Lucian D. Geise, Executive Director

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